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# THE CONDOR

An Illustrated Magazine  
of Western Ornithology

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## EDITORIALS

BETTER In view of the fact that there  
VERNACULAR is in preparation a new A. O. U.  
NAMES Checklist of North American  
Birds, and that this will undoubtedly be the generally accepted authority in matters of nomenclature for the next decade or more, a discussion of certain features is more appropriately in order in advance than later. The A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature announces itself as open to suggestions and recommendations from anyone anywhere, and these will be given due consideration before final action is taken.

We have not been alone in our advocacy of better *common* or vernacular names for our birds than many of those in use in the old List; and this is the subject we wish to bring up here.

Common names should be chosen from the standpoint of popular convenience as well as more or less of technical propriety. The usefulness of the A. O. U. Checklist would in our minds be decidedly augmented by the following modifications and innovations.

Drop possessives; for instance, Audubon Warbler instead of "Audubon's" Warbler. The merits of this usage have already been discussed, and to our minds thoroly demonstrated by its increasing employment.

Use a nominative form of geographical name instead of an adjectival; for example, Texas Nighthawk instead of "Texan" Nighthawk, California Woodpecker instead of "Californian" Woodpecker. The old List is inconsistent in this respect.

Insert some qualifying term before the name

of each bird which has two or more representative races; for example, we have in the old List, "Bluebird," Western Bluebird, Azure Bluebird, etc. But all are *bluebirds*, and the eastern species should be called, say, Eastern Bluebird. So also there should be an Eastern Wood Pewee instead of "Wood Pewee" alone, and so on with a great number of cases.

Change "Partridge" to Quail wherever the former name is used in the old List. We, here in California, never hear of Valley "Partridges"! They are always Valley *Quail*; and the same with the other species.

For similar reasons the term "House Finch" should be replaced by the much more preferable *Linnet*; the "House Finch" of the old List would become Common Linnet; the San Clemente "House Finch" would be known as the San Clemente Linnet, etc. We can see no excuse whatever for retaining "House Finch"; 99 persons out of every 100 who are familiar with Linnets never heard of "House Finches"!

For similar reasons the "American Coot" is far better known as the Mudhen; the latter name should be adopted.

"Leucosticte" should become Rosy Finch, just as it used to be called in earlier literature, this for the sake of the amateur (possibly others) who doesn't know Greek!

"St." or "Saint" Lucas should be replaced by San Lucas wherever this geographic name is used; for instance, San Lucas Cardinal. Both "St. Lucas" and "Saint Lucas" are hybrid names and incorrect.

Besides the above, for varying reasons we think an improvement would be accomplished by making the following substitutions: Mountain Partridge of the old List should be changed to Painted Quail; Plumed Partridge to Mountain Quail; California Vulture to California Condor; Burrowing Owl to Ground Owl; Arkansas Kingbird to Western Kingbird; Santa Cruz Jay to Santa Cruz Island Jay; Large-billed Sparrow to Large-billed Marsh Sparrow; Gambel's Sparrow to Nuttall Sparrow; Thurber's Junco to Sierra Junco; Forbush's Sparrow to Northwestern Lincoln Sparrow; Louisiana Tanager to Western Tanager; Grinnell's Water-Thrush to Alaska Waterthrush; Macgillivray's Warbler to Tolmie Warbler; Bush-Tit to Pacific Bushtit; Chestnut-backed Chickadee to Chestnut-sided Chickadee; California Chickadee to Marin Chickadee; Barlow's Chickadee to Santa Cruz Chickadee.

Besides the above specified cases there are a good many more which warrant reconsideration. We would urge the desirability of employing the very best vernacular names that can be selected. This selection is not an easy task, and the responsibility devolves upon the A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature. At best we can't expect them to please everyone. Yet we hanker after names that we can use in our school work and popular literature without the necessity of explaining why we have to use them *wrongly*!

If anyone has serious objections to the above proposed changes, or if he has further suggestions to make, now is the time to speak; and THE CONDOR is a good medium for the

expression of opinion. We invite relevant discussion.—J. G.

IS EGG-COLLECTING JUSTIFIABLE? In the May-June *Bird-Lore*, 1906, pages 95 to 98, appears an article, entitled "The Amount of Science in Oology", which deserves careful attention from every egg-collector and oologist. The writer, Professor Thomas H. Montgomery of the University of Texas, arraigns oology as a science in a very convincing manner. He handles his subject admirably and we heartily agree with him in a good deal of what he says, tho we as heartily dissent from his repeated implication that the bulk of egg-collecting is useless and should be stopped.

A reply by Mr. Robert P. Sharples, as printed in the September-October issue of *Bird-Lore*, pages 169-170, altho it contains some excellent points, still leaves Professor Montgomery with the best of the argument. Several more points have occurred to us, however, which we hereby submit in defense of the collector and student of bird's eggs and nests.

Even in his contention as to the *quantity* of science in oology Professor Montgomery is not quite fair. He admits that there is a little, but dwells on the technicality that the term excludes everything but what relates solely to the colors, shapes, sizes and numbers of eggs. This is mi-leading, for we all now-a-days use the term oology as including everything pertaining to the eggs, nests, nesting places, and nesting habits of our birds.

Then Professor Montgomery proceeds to belittle the value of whatever facts we can accumulate in this field, partly on the grounds that the field is relatively small, and partly because the published results of the study of oology are in the nature of a bare record of numbers, sizes, descriptions of nest structure, etc.; he says this is not science, but merely a possible preparation. For science begins only when laws are established.

What a juggler of words! He seems to have forgotten for the moment that the vast bulk of the work of embryologists, morphologists, and systematists is a "mere cataloging" of the structures of animals and plants. The work of His in embryology is referred to in comparison with the published descriptions and figures of egg-shells and nests; but we must declare that the distinction appears to us only one of subject matter: both are records of structure.

In belittling the importance of the accumulation of hoards of facts, Professor Montgomery makes a grave error. The majority of present-day scientists (tho perhaps we use the term wrongly!), many of them of eminence, content themselves with a simple accumulation of facts; they have constant reason to deplore the premature deduction of laws (tho *that* is where science begins, according to our learned informant!). The cataloging of a vast array of facts is often necessary to the safe establishment of even a single law in nature. As to the different laws determined, who is as yet in a position to judge anything of their relative values?

We will admit that the field of oology ap-

pears to be *small* as compared to the field of say, embryology. But it seems hardly needful to say that this in no way militates against the value of each fact recorded in the smaller field. The only difference resulting is in the relative sizes of the two masses of facts. Some of us can accomplish more, by nature of our capacity for work, in a small field than we can in a large one: we can gain a more adequate comprehension of the smaller subject. Should we, whose ability happens to be limited, be debarred from any participation in the contribution to science, simply because we cannot enter the largest field? The field of oology, in its broader sense, will be found extensive enough to occupy the average investigator for some time. And in spite of Professor Montgomery's over-emphasis of the barrenness of oology, it without any violence to meaning involves the accumulation of data on habits, life history and general ecology, as well as on the mere egg-shell.

After all, we cannot bring ourselves to believe that the quantity of science in oology is the only deciding point as to whether or not egg-collecting is justifiable. We do not maintain that all collectors pursue the subject with the sole purpose of obtaining knowledge. But we do say that the majority, more or less incidentally perhaps, do obtain a considerable amount of information which becomes sooner or later available to Science.

Besides the scientific aspect of collecting, no matter what its valuation, there is the educational feature so prominent in the development of many individuals. Many an advanced investigator along more important and practical lines received his early training in accuracy and method thru securing and arranging his collection of eggs. We can name at least a dozen eminent men of science who have declared to us that they got their first interest in things of Nature thru collecting birds' eggs. We wonder if Professor Montgomery himself did not get his start in this way, too!

The boy may find far worse play-time employment than in hunting the fields for a new bird, especially when he puts in his spare time at home studying his finds. Which is of most worth, a few bird skins and eggs, or A MAN? The educational value of egg-collecting is to our minds preeminent.

Then there is the recreative phase which is not to be disparaged; and the pleasure to be derived from this pursuit. We must confess that we have gotten more complete satisfaction, in other words *happiness*, out of one vacation trip into the mountains after rare birds and eggs than out of our two years of University work in embryology! The tired business man who takes a week's vacation in the spring, finds in oology a most restful pursuit. The mind-worn school-teacher, and we know several such, forgets all his troubles in a June jaunt into avian haunts. Both take in a few specimens, and about these cluster woody memories which serve to refresh an evening hour now and then during the long work-a-day season. There is an esthetic tinge which only one who has "been there" can appreciate.

Because any one person fails to derive pleasure from a certain pursuit, it is not incumbent upon him to decry that pursuit as followed by anyone else, *unless* it involves an infringement of the rights of others. Let us be tolerant of one another's peculiarities.

We know of some very despicable cases of egg-hoggishness. *Some* egg-collecting is absolutely useless from any standpoint, and that sort we condemn. No *reasonable* collector will pursue any of our native animals to the verge of extermination. We believe that moderate collecting will not work diminution in the numbers of any of our birds. We believe in the *temperate* collecting of anything which results in added happiness to the individual, just so no one else is directly inconvenienced thereby. Such an occupation becomes all the more commendable when it results in the addition of reliable information to our sum total of scientific knowledge.—J. G.

RECORD In Mr. William Brewster's admirable work just published on "The Birds of the Cambridge Region of Massachusetts," we find in the preface a statement of principles which deserve the widest possible recognition by serious bird students. We have ourselves intended to express similar views in these columns. But now that we have them from so eminent an authority, and so distinctly stated, we take the liberty of quoting them verbatim. These sentiments should be taken to heart by the author of every proposed local list or record. Publication of any sort of information intended to be of scientific value is a serious step, and is not to be taken lightly. It is very easy to foist upon the science of ornithology undesirable, not to say erroneous, literature.

Mr. Brewster says:—"My early training and experience have led me to believe that—with certain exceptions about to be specified—the occurrence of birds in localities or regions lying outside their known habitats should not be regarded as definitely established until actual specimens have been taken and afterwards determined by competent authorities. No doubt it is becoming more and more difficult to live up to this rule because of the ever increasing and, in the main, wholesome, popular feeling against the killing of birds for whatever purpose. Nevertheless I cannot admit that mere observation of living birds met with in localities where they do not properly belong, or where they have not been ascertained to occasionally appear, should often be considered as establishing anything more than possible or probable instances of occurrence—according to the weight and character of the evidence.

"Exceptions to the rule may and indeed *should* be made in the cases of species which, like the Turkey Vulture, the Swallow-tailed Kite, and the Cardinal, are easily recognized at a distance and which are reported by persons known to have had previous familiarity with the birds in life. Sight identifications of species somewhat less distinctly characterized than those just mentioned, if made under favorable conditions by observ-

ers of long field experience and tried reliability, may also sometimes be accepted with entire confidence. But on no authority, however good, should a mere field observation of any bird that is really difficult to identify, be taken as establishing an important primal record.

"These principles, which, in my opinion, should govern the *makers* as well as compilers of all local records, were formerly endorsed, and also followed in the main, by most ornithologists. Of late they have been frequently disregarded, especially by the younger generations of bird lovers and students. I have endeavored to apply them consistently and firmly—yet at the same time tolerantly—in dealing with the records considered in the present paper. If some of my rulings appear arbitrary, it must be remembered that it is not always possible to explain the reasons which cause one to look askance at the testimony of certain observers while accepting that of others with entire confidence. It goes without saying that personal considerations—whether of friendship or the reverse—should never be allowed to influence the judgment of any writer on scientific subjects, but his personal knowledge of men and their methods not only does but *should* exert such influence. Moreover there is often internal evidence in printed testimony—perhaps no more tangible than that to be gained by what is called 'reading between the lines'—that leads one irresistibly, and, as a rule, quite safely, to adopt conclusions which cannot always be logically justified or consistently explained."—J. G.

WHY SHOULD IT In number 56 of *The Wilson*  
HAVE BEEN *Bulletin* (September, 1906)  
PRINTED? occurs an article entitled  
"Common Birds of Whittier, California," which excites our severe criticism. In this article appears a half page of introductory matter in which the author states the list following to have been derived from notes taken between November 7, 1905, and May 7, 1906—a period of seven months. And yet the list is divided into "Residents," "Winter Visitors," "Summer Residents," and "Transients"! The author, by the way, is very evidently an "easterner" visiting southern California for the winter. As far as we know, not a specimen was secured to verify the determinations. The list is the main part of the paper, occupying nearly four pages, and embracing no less than ninety-two species. Only one of these, "*Numenius* sp?," is queried, and we are led to believe that there can be absolutely no doubt as to the identity of each of the other ninety-one species enumerated. What galls us most is that the list is couched in full scientific form, containing both scientific and common names and hence each species must be quoted in our synonymy. These will tax our printer's supply of question marks!

We have quoted elsewhere Mr. Brewster's remarks regarding records, and these are extremely apropos in the present instance.

The article in question is poorly edited in several particulars; for one thing there are altogether too many typographical errors. We would em-

phasize the great responsibility of the editor of such a publication as *The Wilson Bulletin*, the aim of which we should hope to be to present bona fide ornithology. An editor's duty is to refuse publication of valueless articles, or worse, as well as to accept and publish in *proper shape* articles of more or less merit. We feel our own responsibility in these matters and *try* to act accordingly.—J. G.

## Minutes of Club Meetings

### NORTHERN DIVISION

SEPTEMBER.—The Club met, Sept. 29, 1906, at the residence of Miss Bertha L. Chapman, 404 Walsworth Ave., Oakland, Cal., with eleven members and four visitors present; Vice-President Fisher occupying the chair.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. In respect to the resolution passed by the Club at the last meeting concerning the donation of a set of the Club publications, with the exception of the first volume of *THE CONDOR*, to the California Academy of Sciences, Mr. Cohen stated that he had a part of the first volume of *THE CONDOR* which he would be glad to donate. Mr. Emerson also offered the first two numbers of *THE CONDOR*.

The order of procedure was reversed and the program taken up before the business.

Mr. F. E. L. Beal gave a very interesting talk on the "Food of Birds." He has been working for five years on California birds alone and brought out in his talk many interesting facts concerning the economic relationships of our birds and also gave something of the methods and accomplishments of his work.

The business of the Club was now taken up and the following propositions for membership were read:

Henry F. Duprey, 919 Morgan St., Santa Rosa, Cal., by J. Grinnell; John E. Thayer, Lancaster, Mass., by J. Grinnell; F. W. Weymouth, 326 Lytton Ave., Palo Alto, Cal., by H. O. Jenkins; Chas. Reining, 601 Webster St., Palo Alto, Cal., by H. O. Jenkins. The following was elected to active membership:

Chas. W. Metz, 323 W. Loucks St., Sheridan, Wyoming.

A motion made by Mr. Emerson to give Mr. Beal a vote of thanks for his instructive talk was seconded and carried.

Dr. F. W. D'Evelyn said a few words in appreciation of Mr. Beal's work and gave some of his own observations concerning feeding habits of birds.

The meeting then adjourned to the dining room where elaborate refreshments were served.

H. O. JENKINS, *Secretary*.

### SOUTHERN DIVISION

OUTING MEETING.—Newhall, Cal., May 19-20, 1906. There were present members Morcom, Judson, Lelande, Robertson and Law.

About the first thing noted on getting off the train was a colony of English sparrows which had its home about the station. Little was done on the 19th other than short excursions on foot into the hills back of Newhall. Mr. Judson found a nest of wren-tit with four eggs, and a nest of black-chinned sparrow just ready for eggs; and later in the day Mr. Law found a nest of almost grown young, which Mr. Morcom thoroly identified as being of this species. The nest was discovered thru the anxiety of the parent when one neared the vicinity of the nest.

Taking an early start on the morning of the 20th, the entire party drove west to the high ridge, and leaving the rig, worked up into the mountains. Mr. Lelande found a grown family of spotted owls, securing one adult. He also found several nests of western flycatcher, from nest just completed to nests with young, all built in crevices against the sides of the bank along the stream. Other birds found breeding were: plain tit, Lawrence goldfinch, green-backed goldfinch, lazuli bunting, black-chinned hummer (several nests of each), black-headed grosbeak, Cabanis and Nuttall woodpeckers (young), house finch, black phoebe, junco (young); and in addition, the following were observed: creeper, slender-billed nuthatch, white-bellied swallow (entering hole in bank), western bluebird, ash-throated flycatcher, western chipping sparrow, western wood pewee, flicker, Gairdner woodpecker, cliff swallow, Audubon and black-throated gray warblers, sharp-shinned and red-tailed hawks, white-throated swift, blue-fronted and California jays.

J. EUGENE LAW, *Secretary*.

SPECIAL MEETING.—Clerk's Office, City Hall, Los Angeles; Aug. 2, 1906. In the absence of the president, the meeting was called to order by Vice-President Judson, with members Morcom, Lelande, Robertson, Rising, Willett, Richardson, Watson, Milton, Alphonse Jay, and Law present, and Mr. Henry Golish visiting.

On motion duly seconded and carried, the Secretary was instructed to cast the unanimous ballot of the members present electing Mr. Charles E. Cosper to active membership. This formality was complied with.

On motion unanimously carried, the invitation of Mr. O. W. Howard to hold a Special Meeting of the Club at his home, Aug. 30, 1906, was accepted. There being no further business and no program, the balance of the